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CHINA IN TRANSFORMATION AND THE WAR.

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ALTHOUGH very few people with any reputation as political students would care to risk a prophecy as to the probable dénouement of the present war, the writer is bold to foretell one thing. China will provide some surprises for the world at large, possibly before the conclusion of the war, inevitably after it is over. Russia and Japan present to the uninstructed observer the spectacle of two men fighting for the possession of a quasi-moribund third; but the supposed helpless one has opened at least one eye, if not very widely, and is eagerly watching the struggle.

Let us briefly recapitulate some of the principal developments in China which have been silently at work during the past few years. The most important change has undoubtedly been in the attitude of the Chinese towards Japan. This has been in the nature of a revolution, and the fact that it has been possible to overcome one of the strongest prejudices in the Chinese mind opens the gate to infinite possibilities.

When the *coup d'état* of 1898 reduced the reforming Emperor to a helpless puppet, exiled the leaders of the movement, and brought into power the most reactionary of Chinese parties, the Western World accepted the situation with apparent resignation. China must work out her own salvation, and Occidental efforts

must be concentrated simply on obtaining as many advantages for trade as were compatible with existing conditions. The attitude was not unreasonable, since it was ostensibly no one's special business to interfere in Chinese domestic affairs, and the action of any one Power or group of Powers would have been resented as much by the others as by China herself. Japan was on a different, and even more delicate, footing, and it is with consummate tact that she has contrived to obtain her ends. One of her most useful agencies has been the Legation at Peking. Europeans who knew that city of diplomatists some years ago can remember the time when Great Britain dominated it politically and socially, as far as the foreign community was concerned. Then came the period of Russian ascendancy, acquiesced in by Britain and her representatives with a sort of blind fatalism. The Russians brought Oriental tactics to bear; they got the best information, not merely by paying for it, but by devoting time, patience, and infinite pains to the task. Cassini, usually credited with a Machiavellian policy in Peking, was in fact a figurehead, Pavloff, the type of a *rusé* Russian diplomat, being in reality the moving spirit of the Legation in these palmy days of Muscovite influence. The Chinese were hypnotized by Russia; the multiplication of Russian ambitions, the number of agencies employed (not the least important being that peculiar institution, the Russo-Chinese Bank), the steady march forward of Russian railways—all this bewildered the weak and venal party at the head of Chinese affairs. Li Hung-Chang, that cynical opportunist, was convinced that Russia was the strongest as well as the most insistent of the Powers who were clamoring at the gates of Peking; and the man who in his earlier days had really tried to make his country strong, ended by throwing her into the arms of her most dangerous enemy. This was the period for Russia of bloodless victories, of shameless breaches of faith, of endless ambitions. For Britain, it was a period of fruitless remonstrance and loss of prestige, while Germany and France, in their several ways, made the most of the opportunity afforded by China's weakness. Japan alone was busy laying a countermine, while refraining carefully from any overt act of aggression. Gradually it became apparent that the Japanese Legation was the best informed in Peking. At the same time, rivalries and dissensions divided the Russian party within itself, until at last the two chief agencies, the Legation

and the Russo-Chinese Bank, were barely on speaking terms. The Russian authorities in Manchuria squabbled with those at Peking. Alexeieff, when he took over the reins of government as Vice-Tsar in the Far East, found a disunited staff, and his stiff militarism and consequent unpopularity did little to restore harmony.

Before all this happened, however, the Boxer incident upset the most careful diplomatic calculations. Japan was on the horns of a dilemma. She was obliged to march with the Allied Armies, and to take part in a punitive expedition against the very people whose *amour propre* she was most anxious not to wound. Only the extraordinary restraint and propriety of the Japanese troops, contrasted with the license of some of the Occidentals, saved the situation for her. Russia undoubtedly gained by the Boxer rising, since it gave her long-sought excuses for strengthening her hold on Manchuria; but Japan gained in moral stature proportionally in Chinese eyes, and, having proved to them that her soldiers were equal in the field to any of the allied troops (a testimony borne by the commanders of different nationalities), she was able also to point a moral to her quondam foes. The necessity of a trained army for China, with all the accompaniments of modern equipment, had long been realized by some of the foremost Chinese statesmen of the day, and by none more clearly than by the Generalissimo of the Northern Forces, Yuan Shih-Kai. This personage has accomplished the difficult task of balancing himself on two stools, being at once the favorite of the Empress Dowager and the favorer of reform. It is well known that he gained the confidence of that remarkable woman, Tszu-Hszi, by an act of treachery to the reformers; but it is also conceded by many who are in sympathy with the Reform party that, at the time of the *coup d'état*, their programme was revolutionary and unlikely to produce good results. Yuan Shih-Kai, having gained a firm footing by his action, has since that time quietly but firmly supported the less visionary reforms, and at the present time has achieved a unique position in China. He is regarded by his countrymen as their one hope in the future, and Europeans who know him speak in the highest terms of his character and capacity. His chief efforts have been bent to the training and equipment of an army in Northern China; for one of his maxims is, that policy without force is useless.

It is needless to say that Japan plays a great part in the con-

siderations of this Chinese statesman. It must be remembered that, unlike Li Hung-Chang, he has resisted the influence of Russia, while to Germany he has been a thorn in the side (in Chihli and Shantung), resisting her attempts at encroachment, barring her way to concessions, and generally making himself as unpleasant as possible. Nevertheless, while making every use of Japanese methods in drilling and equipping his men, he is not, as is sometimes represented, a Japanese tool. His motto is "China for the Chinese." He expresses vigorously the belief that, whichever party wins in the present struggle, China will not be a gainer, unless—and we can imagine that his mental reservation on this subject would be "*unless* China can bring forward a policy backed by force." The lesson taught by Russia in Manchuria, by Germany in Shantung, and by the Allied Armies as they marched to Peking has sunk into the hearts of the Chinese, to whom any less forcible lesson would have been useless. Yuan Shih-Kai has plenty of sympathy in his aspiration to give his country an arm of defence.

Space forbids that the growth of Japanese reforms in China should be described in detail, although it is a most interesting subject and can be traced backwards, as it were, through the ramifications of Chinese society to its various sources. Japan took up the task where Europe had practically laid it down, and she did not build on any of the old foundations. Religious propaganda had always been regarded as the only root-force which could accomplish reform in China, and the heroism and devotion displayed in this cause by Occidental missionaries has been unsurpassed in the history of religion. Deeply as one must sympathize with the Men and the Cause, it is impossible to be satisfied with the result. Japan had two great advantages at the outset of her campaign,—she had the written language as a means of communication, and she had a certain community of religious and social traditions. Although pan-Buddhism is actually playing a part in the Chinese-Japanese *entente*, it is more as a racial than as a religious bond. The radical difference in the Oriental and Occidental attitude towards religion is one of the strangest and most discouraging facts which the Christian missionary has had to face. It is a wall between the races. Japan and China are on the same side of the wall: they can understand each other without shouting. Practically, the opportunity of acquiring many things which had

become in his eyes desirable, without any fear of having his morals questioned or his traditions disturbed, has inclined the Chinese towards the Japanese rather than the Occidental form of modernization.

From this vantage-ground the Japanese began their campaign—how? By the intensely modern method of creating a native press! Europe has put a weapon in the hands of the Orient which she will polish and use in her own way. Let it not be imagined that the views of Europe and her civilization spread by the Japanese-controlled Chinese press are those that have currency among the Anglo-Saxon peoples! It would be a distinct shock to the conceit of many people who are in the habit of patting Japan on the back as an apt pupil, to realize the extent to which the pupil has diagnosed the weakness of the teacher while utilizing as much as possible his strength. The effect produced on the most remote parts of China by the introduction of newspapers has been electric. In a population extraordinarily literate and inquisitive, literature had hitherto been entirely confined to the classics, with the exception of a few sheets, circulated chiefly in the seaport towns and containing little that could reach the populace. One of the first results was the exodus of students to the Japanese colleges, of whom there were last year in Tokyo alone over one thousand, and among these many of the influential class. Japanese teachers have largely replaced the Europeans in the Chinese colleges. The tradition that high-class Chinese could not leave home without losing caste has been dispelled by the visits of princes of the blood to foreign countries, and by the appointment of sons of mandarins of high rank to the suites of the ministers in London and Washington.

One of the most remarkable and far-reaching changes, however, is to be found in the revolution which has taken place in examination questions for the degrees which open the road to official appointment. In the place of the stereotyped classical allusions, tests of memory, and so forth, we find in the last year's papers questions as to the significance of the Monroe Doctrine, the value of the Trans-Isthmian canal and Trans-Siberian railway, the meaning of Free Trade and Protection, the characteristics of the educational systems of different countries, and the essentials of a pure and efficient civil service. The new departure is in many cases to be traced to the influence of missionary-disseminated

literature, and, in particular, to the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge, which, in later years, has worked on the broadest non-sectarian basis of education. The most significant questions, however, relate to the progress of Japan and whether she is "merely following European footsteps." Simultaneously, an industrial *entente* has been effected between China and Japan. Workmen are crowding Japanese arsenals and factories to be taught the use of modern machinery and methods, and the East Asiatic League, which is the organ of the *entente*, devotes itself largely to promoting this side of Chinese reform.

Who can doubt, in the face of all this evidence, that China is on the eve of a new era, and that the new reform movement, of which Japan is the prime instigator, will be successful, because it does not centre in any one district, class of society or political party, but has centres of activity in the army, the mandarin class, the *literati* and the industrial class. All have been touched with the magic wand, while the widely disseminated literature of the Japanese press carries new light to the farthest ends of China. In this connection, it must be remembered that to the Imperial Maritime Customs, under their British Director-General, China owes one of the most useful developments which make for reform. A network of postal service has been spread over the length and breadth of the eighteen provinces, which makes the dissemination of the newspapers and literature possible. As this article is being written, there comes a communication from Sir Robert Hart, in which he unfolds a great scheme of reform for China. The time chosen appears inopportune, the scheme itself is ill-balanced and chimerical; but that such a suggestion should emanate from so conservative a man, who from long residence and association has become more Chinese than many a Chinaman, is additional proof of the profound changes in the Celestial Empire.

The world, which has been almost electrified by the immense successes gained by Japan so far—successes which no subsequent events can rob of their significance—has given hardly sufficient credit to one Japanese arm. It is to her careful and systematic studies, as represented in her truly wonderful Intelligence Department, that Japan owes most. Russia, we say, was taken by surprise. But why? Because Japan, who had been conducting negotiations with the utmost patience and propriety, knew the moment to strike. It was the exact moment when world-condi-

tions were most favorable. It is inconceivable that Japan would have risked her very existence in so vital a struggle, had she not been fully cognizant of, and made allowance for, various factors which did not appear on the surface. Japan has played no Machiavellian game, she has only utilized the superior advantages of her Oriental reserve and pertinacity in getting information and keeping it quiet; and, coming as an outsider into the game of Occidental politics, she has perhaps seen more than the old performers. It is impossible within the limits of this article to follow out the many threads of policy which have been converging in Eastern Asia; but a very few will suffice.

Let us take recent British action in Asia. One of our great difficulties in Asia has always been our lack of really reliable information, which has been chiefly obtained through a few of our own Asiatic subjects whom we have deigned to employ. The British method of dividing Asia into compartments and treating them separately has also been against us. Fortunately for Japanese aims, we have recently had an Indian Viceroy of more intelligence and force of character than is usual, and a clearer understanding of the Asiatic situation as a whole was vouchsafed to this Viceroy than to any of his predecessors. Incidentally, we must all remember that a Japanese gentleman of education passed a number of months in the Tibetan capital recently, and that the revelation of the Russo-Chinese understanding respecting Tibet came through Peking. The origin of this understanding is not obscure, and notwithstanding the repeated and explicit denials of the existence of any such agreement the evidence in the possession of British authorities is conclusive. While Russian influence declined at Peking, Chinese influence has been discredited at Lhasa, and the Russians provided a second string to their bow in the shape of a friendly intercourse with the Dalai-Lama, whom they actually provided with a Russian (Buriat) counsellor. The British move into Tibet, besides happening at an auspicious moment for Japanese interests, which demand that every distraction possible should hamper her adversary, has the effect of demonstrating to the Chinese the vulnerability of that Russian shield on which they had relied. The writer is inclined to think that China will welcome a settlement of the Tibetan question which recognizes her own suzerainty in a part of the Celestial Empire which was fast slipping from her grasp.

The recent *entente* between Britain and France has been discussed *ad infinitum* on both sides of the Atlantic, and the writer has very little that is novel to add. It has rather escaped notice, however, that a certain docility on the part of Britain as regards disputed points in connection with Siam, the abandonment of railway schemes which might conflict with French ambitions in southwestern China, as well as the more open concessions in North Africa and Newfoundland, have been the foundations of the newly cemented friendship. At the same time, there has been a renewal of British activity in other quarters of Asia from which we hope good results, and the conclusion to which one is driven in regarding these moves in the diplomatic game is that, in Asia at least, British foreign policy has quite recently become more coherent. Looked on as a whole, we can see a distinct plan, a focus as it were; a partial breaking down of the "compartment" theory. However that may be, Japan, watching the game very closely, has clearly perceived that we have achieved the task of detaching France from an inconvenient interpretation of the Dual Alliance, at the very moment when it might have been dangerous to Japanese interests. Japan, moreover, has no longer to fear a repetition of the Triple Alliance, which was so inimical to her interests after a previous war. Germany, although she began her career of Pacific expansion with so much vigor, is reduced to a rather minor part in the European chorus. She is at present devoting her energies to ingratiating herself with Russia, to working up the "Yellow Peril" bogey, and incidentally to getting Yuan Shih-Kai into trouble if possible, for nothing would be more unwelcome to Germany than an armed, efficient China. A very plausible opportunity may present itself in the question of Chinese neutrality.

There is no doubt that the Chinese government is genuinely desirous of preserving a neutral attitude and is urged thereto by Japan, Britain and the United States. For China to become involved in the struggle would not only open the door for Russian retaliation at many vulnerable points, but would inevitably lead to an appeal for intervention on the part of Russia, which would certainly mean further spoliation of China. At the same time, the position is one of peculiar difficulty and danger. Manchuria itself is chiefly inhabited by Chinese from the eighteen provinces, with a mere handful of Manchus; and these, by a General Order

of Alexeieff, are to be held responsible for acts committed by the robber bands which infest the country. As the Occidental press just now contains frequent reference to these "Chunchuses,"* it may be useful to give a slight description of them.

Manchuria has always, since the Chinese throne fell under a Manchu domination, been the Alsatia of the eighteen provinces. When the conquering Manchus were engaged in enforcing their supremacy in China and draining their own country of men to place in official posts throughout the Empire, and to act as Imperial troops, China, in return, sent back a stream of immigrants to sparsely populated Manchuria. These were chiefly agriculturists or traders, but the lax state of law attracted all who had overstepped the bounds of law in their own country. Malefactors of every class found refuge there; and a large number, banding together, began to make a living by preying on the more industrious immigrants. So systematic did their depredations become, as Chinese commerce developed, that they nearly killed the goose that laid the golden eggs, and at length a compromise was effected which was truly Chinese. The Hung-hu-tsz actually established their own insurance office in Newchwang, where, for a consideration, the merchant, travelling inland, was provided with a little red flag (the Robber Sign), and enjoyed immunity from depredations in the country infested with marauders. In recent years, many of these bands, defying Chinese authority, smuggled improved weapons across the northern (Russian) frontier, and they are not only fairly well armed, but are well mounted and have the mobility, reckless daring, and ingenuity common to such free-booting gangs in every age and every clime. Their headquarters are in remote and inaccessible, but fertile, recesses of the mountainous region between Mongolia and Manchuria. Their numbers vary greatly according to the season and the character of the season. Any one who has had experience of such bands knows the peculiar relations they are able to establish with the village inhabitants, who are at once their victims and their allies. No more difficult problem exists in warfare than that of dealing with such an enemy, who will not come into the open; Americans have not forgotten their experiences with the Ladrões in the Philippines.

* "*Hung-hu-tsz*" (or "*tzu*") is the correct name, and means "Red-beard." Chun-chuse is evidently the Anglicized version of the Russian form, Khunkuse or Khunkuz.

Alexeieff's order, "All Chinese harboring Chunchuses will be shot, and their villages burnt," if carried into effect, will mean the devastation of the whole country and the practical extermination of a large section of the people; or else it will drive the greater portion of the people into outlawry as robbers themselves. The writer has always held very strongly that these drastic measures are worse than useless in dealing with this difficulty, and they have invariably failed wherever put in force. The really peaceful villager, with a truly Chinese desire to be left alone and to practise his occupation without interference, is placed between the devil and the deep sea. He is denied arms, and is therefore helpless before the Hung-hu-tsz, who have terrorized him and his fathers from time immemorial. On the other hand, he has the fear of Russia before his eyes, and he knows from grim experience how heavy Russia's hand can be. Not content with this measure against the robbers, Alexeieff has actually promulgated an order by which Chinese officials may be arrested on mere suspicion of supplying information to the Japanese.

Just across the border, an imaginary line, on one side of which this state of affairs exists, is an army of twenty or thirty thousand under General Ma. The situation is, therefore, a delicate one. A spark may set fire to the powder magazine. Yuan Shih-Kai, as Generalissimo of the Northern Forces, is clearly a person on whom much depends.

There are already many signs that the Hung-hu-tsz are to play an important part in the war. Russia is ready to declare that they are employed by Japan, and the only absolute argument against this hypothesis is the proved prudence of the Japanese, who would place themselves in a false position by so doing and might precipitate the very thing—intervention—which they are most anxious to avoid. As a matter of fact, the Russians have already tried to utilize them as irregular forces, but the execution of several of their leaders (most flagrant marauders) has alienated all these lawless bands, who regarded it as an act of treachery. They may not love the Japanese, but they are shrewd enough to wish to be on the winning side, and the successes of Japan must have won her many adherents. It would be difficult to disprove the charge, of Japanese complicity with the Robbers, and still more difficult to prove that the Robbers are quite independent of Chinese aid or encouragement. Chinese soldiers in disguise may

well be found within their ranks, and although in reality they may be deserters from the army it will be impossible to prove this clearly. While the attitude of the Government and of the Chinese General remains correct, it would be in the highest degree unreasonable to set up a charge of breach of neutrality; but there are evident signs that such a charge will be made on the very slightest pretext. It is to be hoped that the Powers whose interests demand that China should be kept out of the fray, are exercising special vigilance in this matter, and are prepared to meet any charge with evidence of its unreason.

A move on the part of Russia which should meet with universal disapproval in the civilized world, is the recent order as to the employment of convicts from Saghalin as soldiers in Manchuria. Any one who has experience of Russian communities in Siberia and Manchuria is aware that even the less desperate criminals, of whom the lowest stratum of society is formed, are a constant menace to property and even to life. But the Saghalin convicts are criminals of the worst type, brutalized still further by the circumstances of existence in their horrible exile. Surely no civilized nation has ever called into its service men of such calibre, and when the complicated conditions of the country are taken into consideration, and it is remembered that these men may be called on to mete out justice to unarmed villagers, to maintain order—they who have set the laws of order in defiance in the most desperate way—and to uphold the honor of “Holy Russia” among a pagan people, one may well tremble for the consequences. This action is a curious commentary on the statement given to the world in the pages of this REVIEW by Count Cassini. He tells us that “the flower of enlightened civilization blooms through a land that a few years ago was a waste.” Count Cassini’s picture of Manchuria blooming under Russian rule inevitably recalls that fatal name of Blagovestchensk, and he is prepared with a statement concerning that episode which is hardly paralleled for audacity. We are told that the Boxers, aided by Chinese regular troops commanded by Chinese officers, crossed the Ameer and attacked Blagovestchensk. One feels that Count Cassini’s defence of his country’s policy cannot but lose from such palpable distortion of facts well known and attested by reliable witnesses.

Of the many considerations which arise out of the points raised in this article, the one which the writer is most anxious to press

home is the delicate and dangerous position of China and the necessity for preparedness on the part of those Powers which desire to keep her out of the fray. We have seen that the course of events, not merely in the Far East, but in other parts of Asia, makes it likely that Russia will be specially desirous of embroiling China, whose influence in Central Asia can no longer be regarded as pro-Russian; but we have also seen that the present grouping of Occidental Powers is sufficiently favorable to Japan to secure her a fair field. That she relied on this is as certain as that she gauged the fact, long before it was palpable to Europe, that the war would not array the whole Russian Empire against her. We know now that it is a war waged by the bureaucracy, who are not even unanimous among themselves; and when we remember this, and remember that some of the leading Russian statesmen are opposed to the headlong policy which led to the war, and that the bulk of the people are indifferent, if not averse, to it, we may indulge the hope that the conflict will result in a more even and permanent adjustment of Far-Eastern politics than has hitherto been possible, without that absolute ruin of either of the combatants which our Job's comforters are fond of predicting.

As an old friend and admirer of the wonderful Chinese Empire and a profound believer in its future of prosperity and usefulness, if only it could accomplish domestic reform, the writer cannot help cherishing the hope that this favorable solution will be found possible. If Yuan Shih-Kai fulfils the promise he has given—he is only forty-five years old—he may prove the leader for whom China has waited so long. Removed from the deadly pressure of the Muscovite on the north, China could deal effectively with the aggressions of the foreigner; and, with moderate measures of reform, she would be able to develop her unrivalled resources and maintain her independence as a nation, and yet afford a market for the great expansionist commercial Powers.

ARCHIBALD R. COLQUHOUN.